amar chitra katha

No. 105 Rs. 2

DASHARATHA

THE STORY OF RAMA'S FATHER



Our Amar Chitra Katha, *Dasharatha*, has been drawn mainly from Valmiki's famous epic poem—*Ramayana.*

Ravana, an evil Rakshasa, had performed severe penances and obtained a boon from Brahma. No celestial being, be it Yaksha, Gandharva or Deva, could kill him. Armed with this boon, he invaded Amaravati, the city of the Devas and played havoc among its inhabitants. Distressed, they appealed to Vishnu.

On earth at that time, Dasharatha, the prosperous, wise and just king of Ayodhya, bent on obtaining a son, was engaged in performing a series of sacrifices.

To help the Devas Vishnu decided to manifest himself on earth and destroy Ravana, since Brahma's boon did not protect Ravana from men. And he chose to be born as four sons to the three queens of Dasharatha.

As Dasharatha delighted in his growing sons, particularly in Rama the eldest, little did he dream that the curse, hurled at him for a sin committed by him in ignorance when he was a mere lad, would materialize with an impact that would be the death of him.

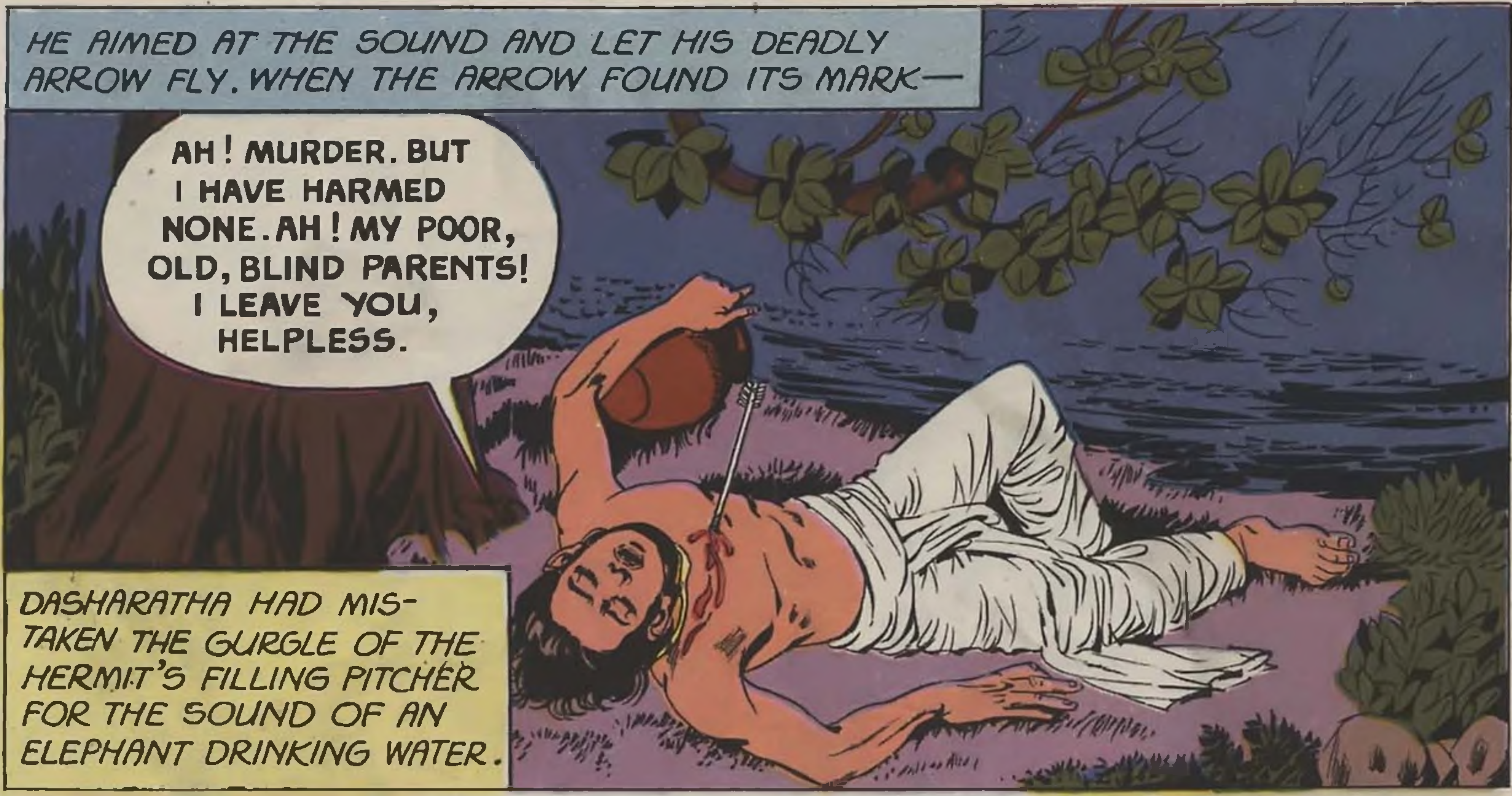
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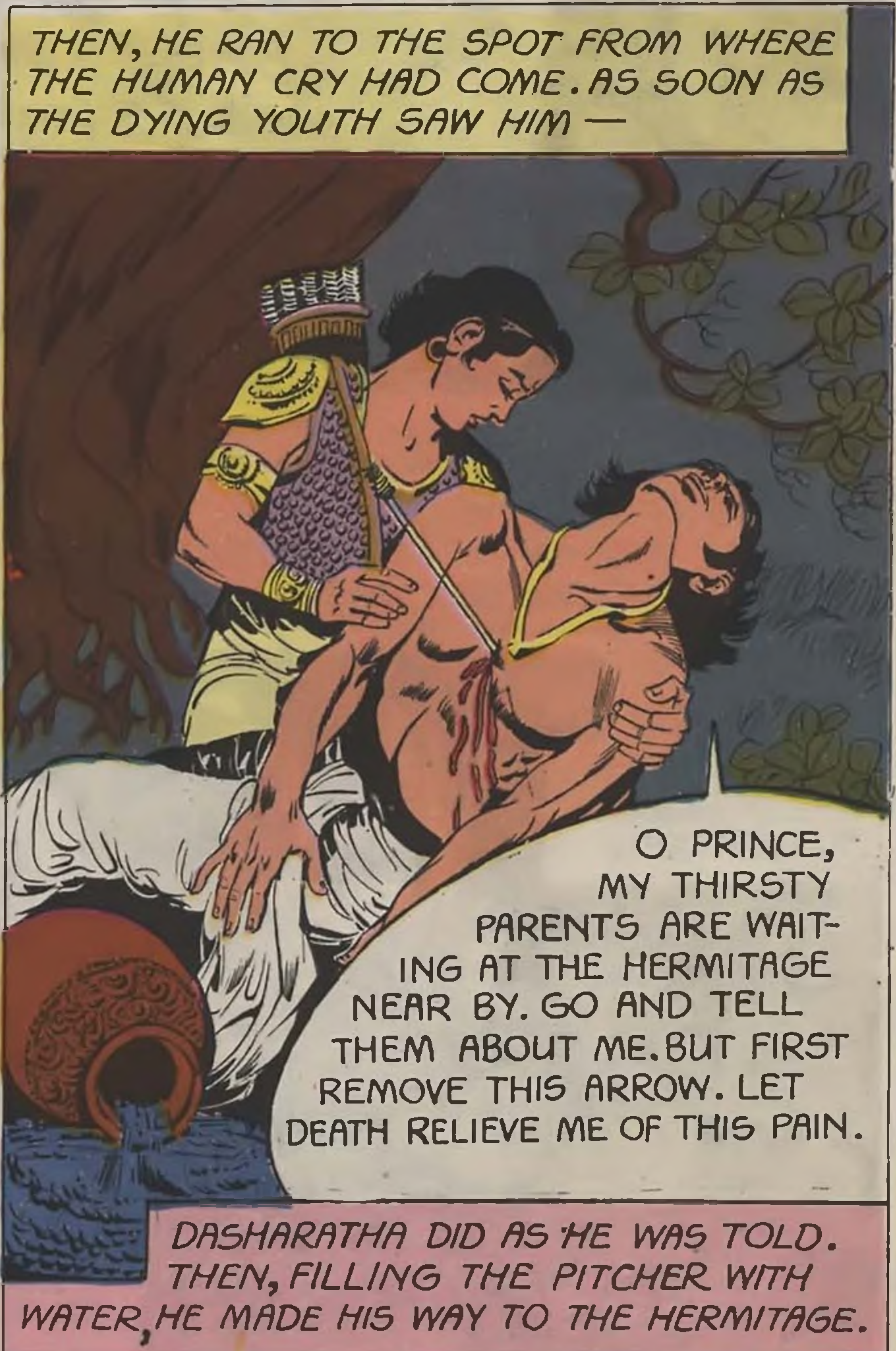
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DASHARATHA
DASHARATHA, THE SON OF AJA AND INDUMATI, WAS THE BELOVED CROWN PRINCE OF AYODHYA, THE CAPITAL OF THE FLOURISHING KINGDOM OF KOSALA ON THE BANKS OF THE RIVER SARAYU. LIKE HIS FATHER, YOUNG DASHARATHA WAS A SKILFUL ARCHER. HE COULD HIT HIS TARGET GUIDED ONLY BY SOUND. AND HE LOVED TO EXERCISE THIS SKILL.
ONE DARK, RAINY NIGHT AS DASHARATHA WAS LOOKING OUT FOR GAME—
GLUG GLUG GLUG GLUG GLUG
WHAT'S THAT? A THIRSTY ELEPHANT'S TRUNK, OUT FOR ITS FILL!


HE AIMED AT THE SOUND AND LET HIS DEADLY ARROW FLY. WHEN THE ARROW FOUND ITS MARK—
AH! MURDER. BUT I HAVE HARMED NONE. AH! MY POOR, OLD, BLIND PARENTS! I LEAVE YOU, HELPLESS.
DASHARATHA HAD MISTAKEN THE GURGLE OF THE HERMIT'S FILLING PITCHER FOR THE SOUND OF AN ELEPHANT DRINKING WATER.


FOR A MOMENT HE STOOD PETRIFIED.
WHAT HAVE I DONE! I WHO AM A VIRTUOUS KOSALA PRINCE, THE PROTECTOR OF THE WEAK!

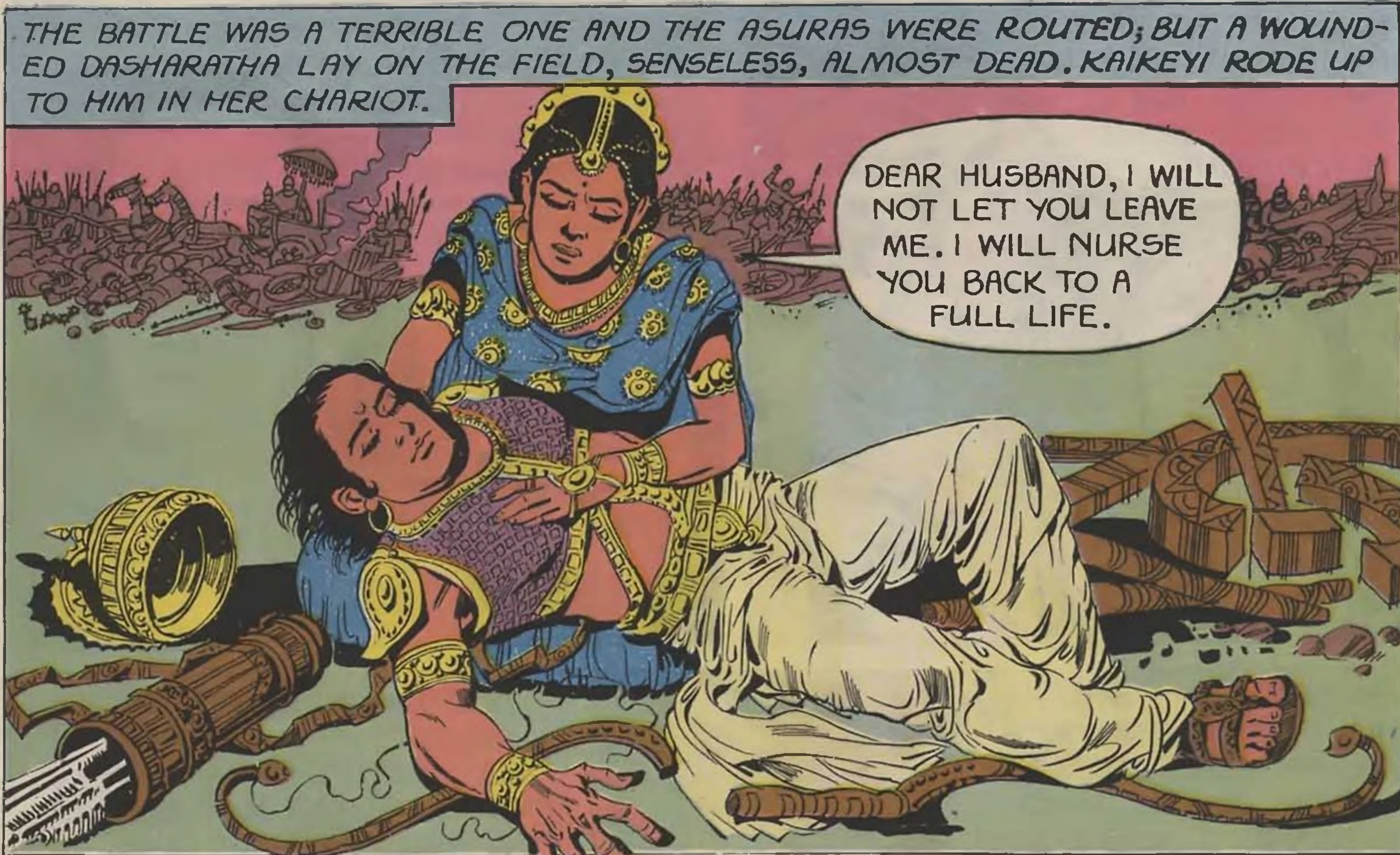

THEN, HE RAN TO THE SPOT FROM WHERE THE HUMAN CRY HAD COME. AS SOON AS THE DYING YOUTH SAW HIM —
O PRINCE, MY THIRSTY PARENTS ARE WAITING AT THE HERMITAGE NEAR BY. GO AND TELL THEM ABOUT ME. BUT FIRST REMOVE THIS ARROW. LET DEATH RELIEVE ME OF THIS PAIN.
DASHARATHA DID AS HE WAS TOLD. THEN, FILLING THE PITCHER WITH WATER, HE MADE HIS WAY TO THE HERMITAGE.


MEANWHILE, AT THE HERMITAGE —
OUR SON HAS BEEN AWAY A LONG WHILE. COULD SOME-THING HAVE HAPPENED TO HIM?
JUST THEN THEY HEARD FOOTSTEPS APPROACHING.
AH! THERE YOU ARE AT LAST. QUICK, GIVE ME THE WATER. I CAN-NOT BEAR THE THIRST ANY LONGER.
TEARS FLOWED DOWN DASHARATHA'S FACE AS HE STOOD THERE, SPEECH-LESS WITH GUILT.
WHY ARE YOU SILENT, MY SON? YOU KNOW THAT YOU ARE OUR VERY LIFE. SPEAK TO US, DEAR SON.
O VENERABLE ONE, I AM NOT YOUR SON. MY NAME IS DASHARATHA. I HAVE COM-MITTED A HEINOUS SIN AND STAND BEFORE YOU, SAD AND REPENTANT.
AND DASHARATHA TOLD THEM WHAT HE HAD UNKNOWINGLY DONE.


THE OLD COUPLE SAT STUNNED FOR A FEW SECONDS. THEN PAST THE CHOKING GRIEF CAME THE WORDS.
IT WAS MY SON. OUR ONLY SON. YOU KILLED HIM.
THE BEREFT FATHER CURSED DASHARATHA.
YOUR SON TOO SHALL BE PARTED FROM YOU. AND YOU SHALL DIE GRIEVING FOR HIM.
A THOROUGHLY SHAKEN DASHARATHA RETURNED TO HIS PALACE.
BUT THE INCIDENT GRADUALLY FADED FROM HIS MEMORY. ONE DAY AJA SENT FOR HIM.
DASHARATHA, EVER SINCE YOUR MOTHER DIED THE KINGDOM HAS BECOME A BURDEN TO ME. YOU HAVE COME OF AGE. NOW YOU RULE THE LAND AND LET ME RETIRE TO THE FOREST.
SOON AFTER, ON THE ADVICE OF HIS MINISTERS AND SPIRITUAL GUIDES, DASHARATHA MARRIED KAUSALYA, A PRINCESS OF KOSALA.

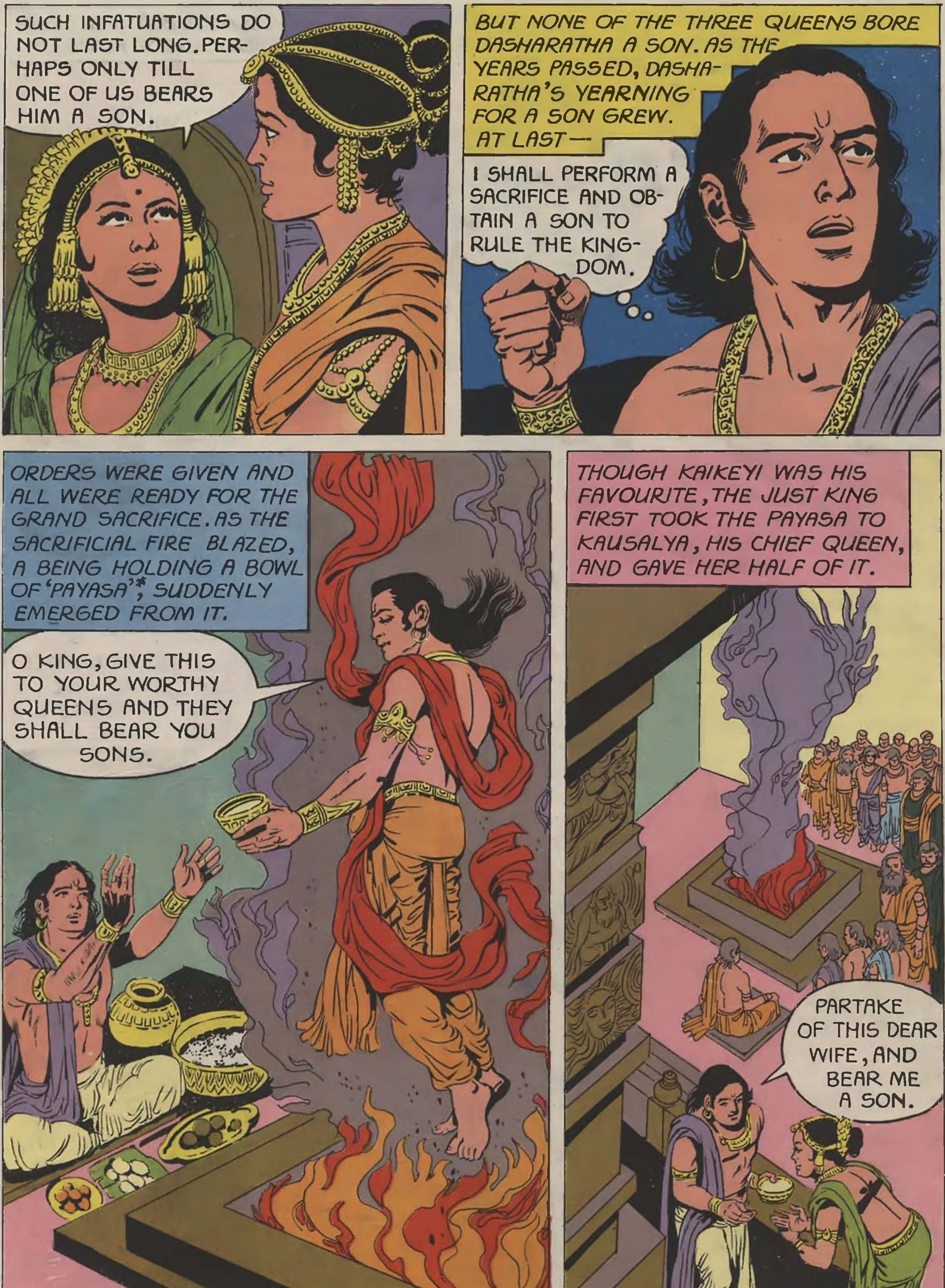

DASHARATHA WAS A NOBLE, VIRTUOUS KING AND WAS LOVED BY ALL. SO RENOWNED FOR VALOUR WAS HE THAT EVEN INDRA, KING OF THE DEVAS, SOUGHT HIS HELP IN HIS WARS WITH THE ASURAS.
BUT DASHARATHA WAS UNHAPPY. KAUSALYA HAD NOT BORNE HIM ANY SONS.
I SHALL SEEK THE HAND OF THE LOVELY DAUGHTER OF ASHWAPATHI, LORD OF THE KEKAYAS.
IN ORDER TO WIN THE BEAUTIFUL KAIKEYI, DASHARATHA MADE A PROMISE TO ASHWAPATHI.
THE SON BORN TO KAIKEYI SHALL BECOME THE CROWN PRINCE AND SHE, QUEEN MOTHER.
THE YEARS PASSED, BUT KAIKEYI TOO FAILED HIM.
I SHALL WED SUMITRA, THE GENTLE PRINCESS OF MAGADHA. SHE IS SURE TO BEAR ME A SON.
BUT SUMITRA TOO REMAINED A BARREN WIFE.


MEANWHILE INDRA, KING OF THE DEVAS, WAS IN TROUBLE ONCE AGAIN. ONE DAY—
O KING, LORD INDRA SEEKS YOUR HELP AGAINST THE ASURA SHAMBARA.
DASHARATHA TURNED TO KAIKEYI.
I SHALL LEAVE IMMEDIATELY.
LORD, LET ME COME WITH YOU.
HA, HA, MY DEAR ONE, A BATTLEFIELD IS NO PLACE FOR YOU.
BUT I AM NO ORDINARY WOMAN. I AM THE DAUGHTER OF THE INVINCIBLE ASHWAPATHI.
BESIDES, MY LORD, I DO NOT WISH TO BE HERE ALONE WITHOUT YOU.
THEN COME, LOVABLE ONE. COME WITH ME TO THE BATTLEFIELD.


THE BATTLE WAS A TERRIBLE ONE AND THE ASURAS WERE ROUTED; BUT A WOUNDED DASHARATHA LAY ON THE FIELD, SENSELESS, ALMOST DEAD. KAIKEYI RODE UP TO HIM IN HER CHARIOT.
DEAR HUSBAND, I WILL NOT LET YOU LEAVE ME. I WILL NURSE YOU BACK TO A FULL LIFE.


SHE HAD HIM REMOVED TO HER TENT AND TENDED HIM DAY AND NIGHT TILL HE REGAINED CONSCIOUSNESS. AS SOON AS HE OPENED HIS EYES—
KAIKEYI, MY DEAREST QUEEN, YOU HAVE BROUGHT ME BACK TO LIFE. ASK ANY TWO BOONS OF ME.
AT THIS MOMENT, WITH YOU ALIVE, I HAVE ALL I NEED, MY LORD. I'LL ASK FOR THE BOONS WHEN I NEED THEM.


FROM THEN ON KAIKEYI BECAME DASHARATHA'S FAVOURITE QUEEN. THE GENTLE YOUNG SUMITRA, UNABLE TO BEAR HIS NEGLECT, SPOKE HER HEART OUT TO KAUSALYA WHOSE SPECIAL PROTECTION SHE ENJOYED.
EVER SINCE THE BOLD KAIKEYI ACCOMPANIED OUR LORD TO THE BATTLE-FIELD, HE HAS NO EYES FOR US. IT HURTS ME.
NEVER MIND, SUMITRA. LET US CONTINUE TO SERVE HIM WITH LOVE AND DEVOTION.



* A GRUEL MADE OUT OF MILK, SUGAR AND RICE.


THEN HE WENT TO SUMITRA AND GAVE HER A FOURTH OF WHAT WAS LEFT.
I SHALL GIVE THE REST TO KAIKEYI.
AS HE WAS ABOUT TO DO SO, A THOUGHT SUDDENLY STRUCK HIM AND HE CHANGED HIS MIND.
I SHALL GIVE HER ONLY HALF OF IT AND GIVE THE REST TO GENTLE SUMITRA.
WITHIN A YEAR, KAUSALYA GAVE BIRTH TO RAMA; KAIKEYI TO BHARATA; AND SUMITRA, WHO HAD THE 'PAYASA' TWICE, TO LAKSHMANA AND SHATRUGHNA. THOUGH THE PRINCES LOVED EACH OTHER—
RAMA IS DEARER TO LAKSHMANA THAN LIFE ITSELF. AND SHATRUGHNA IS PARTIAL TO BHARATA. I WAS WISE TO GIVE THE DOCILE SUMITRA THE SECOND PORTION.
AND THOUGH ALL FOUR PRINCES DELIGHTED THE HEART OF DASHARATHA, RAMA, THE ELDEST, WAS HIS FAVOURITE. INDEED, HE WAS THE FAVOURITE OF ALL AYODHYA.
HE HAS EVEN BECOME THE FAVOURITE OF KAIKEYI AND SUMITRA FOR HE LOVES AND HONOURS THEM AS HE DOES HIS OWN MOTHER. HE WOULD MAKE AN IDEAL KING FOR AYODHYA.


BUT I AM BOUND BY MY PROMISE TO KAIKEYI'S FATHER WHEN I MARRIED HER.
A FEW DAYS LATER—
HOW WELL BHARATA SHOOTS! KAIKEYI, MY BELOVED, HE WILL MAKE AN EXCELLENT KING.
YES, MY LORD. BUT RAMA IS OUR ELDEST SON AND IS AN IDEAL PRINCE. BESIDES HE LOVES ME EVEN MORE THAN HIS OWN MOTHER.
DASHARATHA WAS HAPPY TO HEAR THIS.
HER WORDS REASSURE ME AS I WOULD HAVE RAMA RULE AFTER ME. YET, I MUST TAKE CARE TO KEEP KAIKEYI IN THIS FRAME OF MIND.
STRIVING TO KEEP KAIKEYI HAPPY ALWAYS, DASHARATHA NEGLECTED KAUSALYA AND SUMITRA.
SENSING REJECTION AS WIFE, KAUSALYA MAGNIFIED HER ROLE AS HOUSEWIFE. ONE DAY AS SHE EXAMINED THE EXPENSES OF THE QUEENS' APARTMENTS—
KAIKEYI SPENDS MORE THAN WE DO. IF ONLY THE KING WOULDN'T INDULGE HER SO.

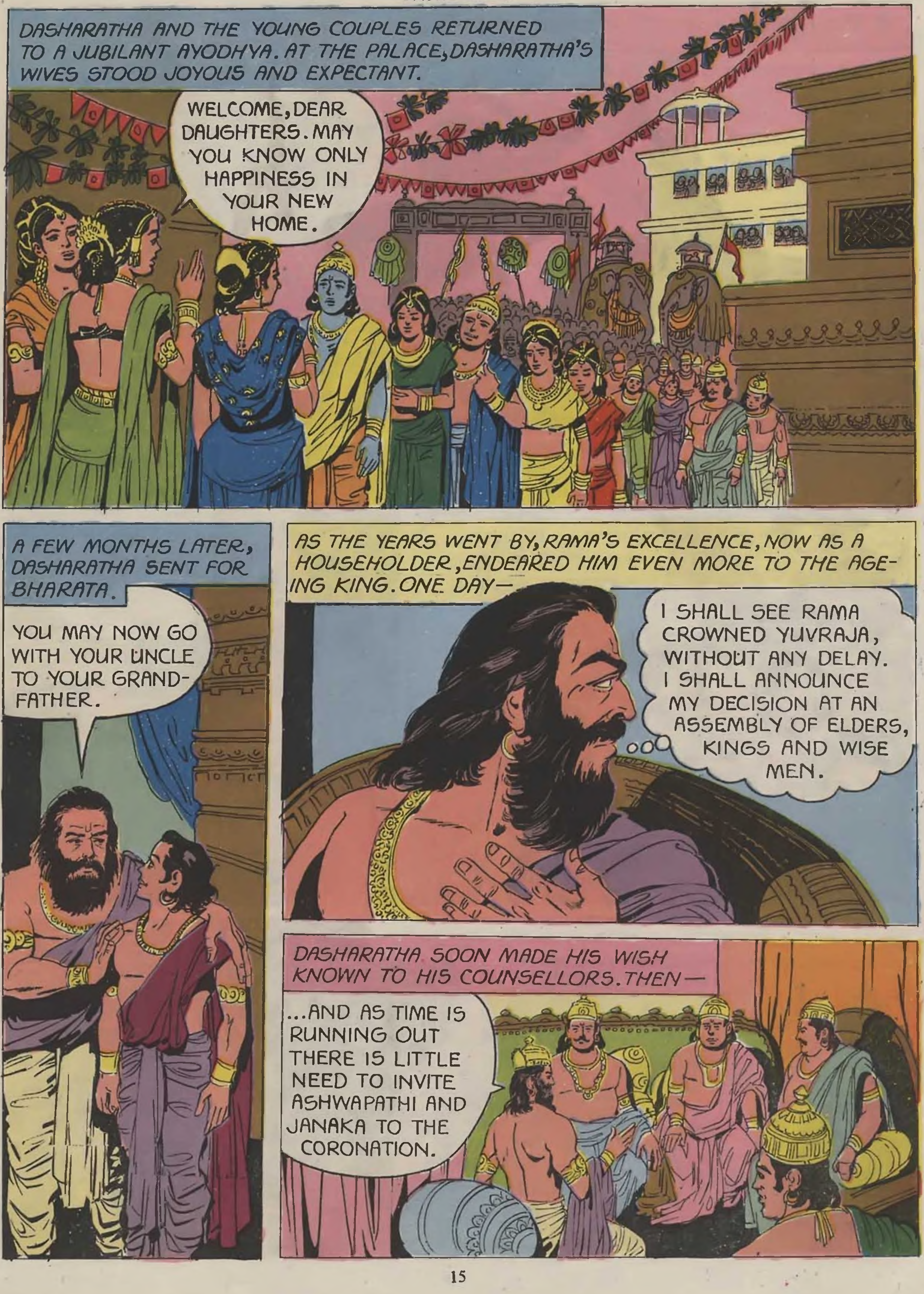

SHE SENT FOR THE YOUNGER QUEEN.
KAIKEYI, EXTRAVAGANCE IS BAD; EVEN IN REGAL QUARTERS.
MY APARTMENTS AND MY PERSON MUST BE WORTHY OF MY LORD, THE KING. MORE SO AS HE SPENDS MOST OF HIS LEISURE HOURS WITH ME.
THE TAUNT HURT KAUSALYA BUT SHE WISELY MAINTAINED HER SILENCE.
DASHARATHA WHO OVERHEARD THEIR CONVERSATION WAS PERTURBED.
THEIR QUARRELS SHOULD NOT SPOIL RAMA'S CHANCES. I MUST ENSURE THAT SUCH SITUATIONS DO NOT COME UP AGAIN.
MEANWHILE THE CHILDREN HAD GROWN INTO HANDSOME YOUTHS.
IT IS TIME THE PRINCES WERE MARRIED.
JUST THEN —
LORD, THE RENOWNED SAGE, VISHWAMITRA, IS HERE.
DASHARATHA AND THE OTHERS RUSHED OUT TO WELCOME THE SAGE.

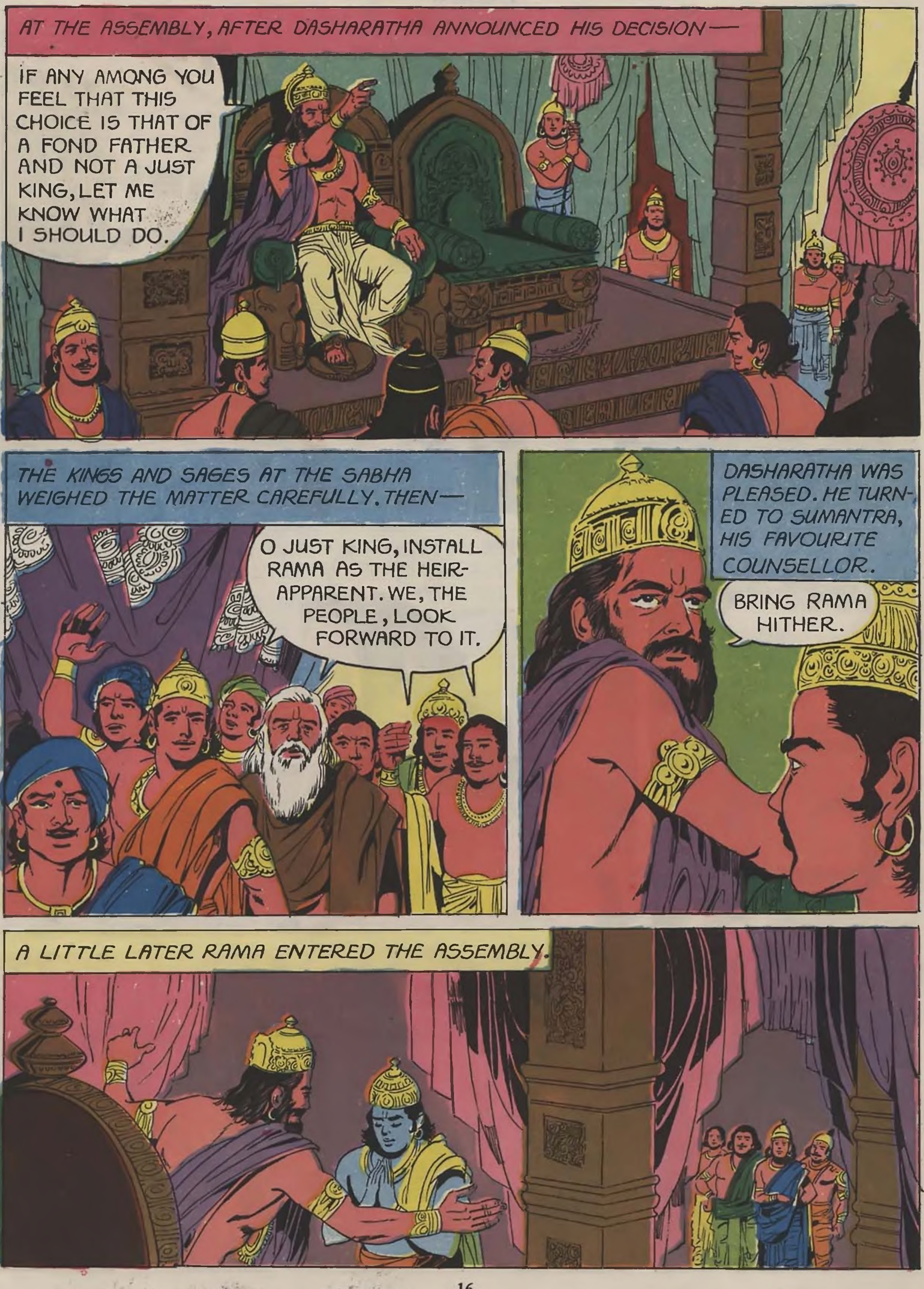

LATER—
O VENERABLE ONE, CAN I BE OF ANY SERVICE TO YOU? I PROMISE TO GRANT ANY WISH OF YOURS.
O KING, CERTAIN RAKSHASAS* FREQUENTLY SPOIL MY SACRED RITUALS.
SEND YOUR ELDEST SON, THE VALIANT RAMA, WITH ME. ONLY HE CAN DESTROY THEM.
DASHARATHA WAS STUNNED. HE COULD HARDLY SPEAK.
RAMA IS BARELY SIXTEEN, A MERE BOY. NO! I CANNOT PART WITH MY FIRSTBORN. IF YOU LIKE, MY FRIENDS AND I WILL HELP YOU.
VISHWAMITRA WAS ENRAGED.
O KING, YOUR WORDS ARE UNWORTHY OF YOUR LINEAGE. YOU GAVE ME A PROMISE AND NOW SAY YOU CANNOT KEEP IT.

* DEMONS

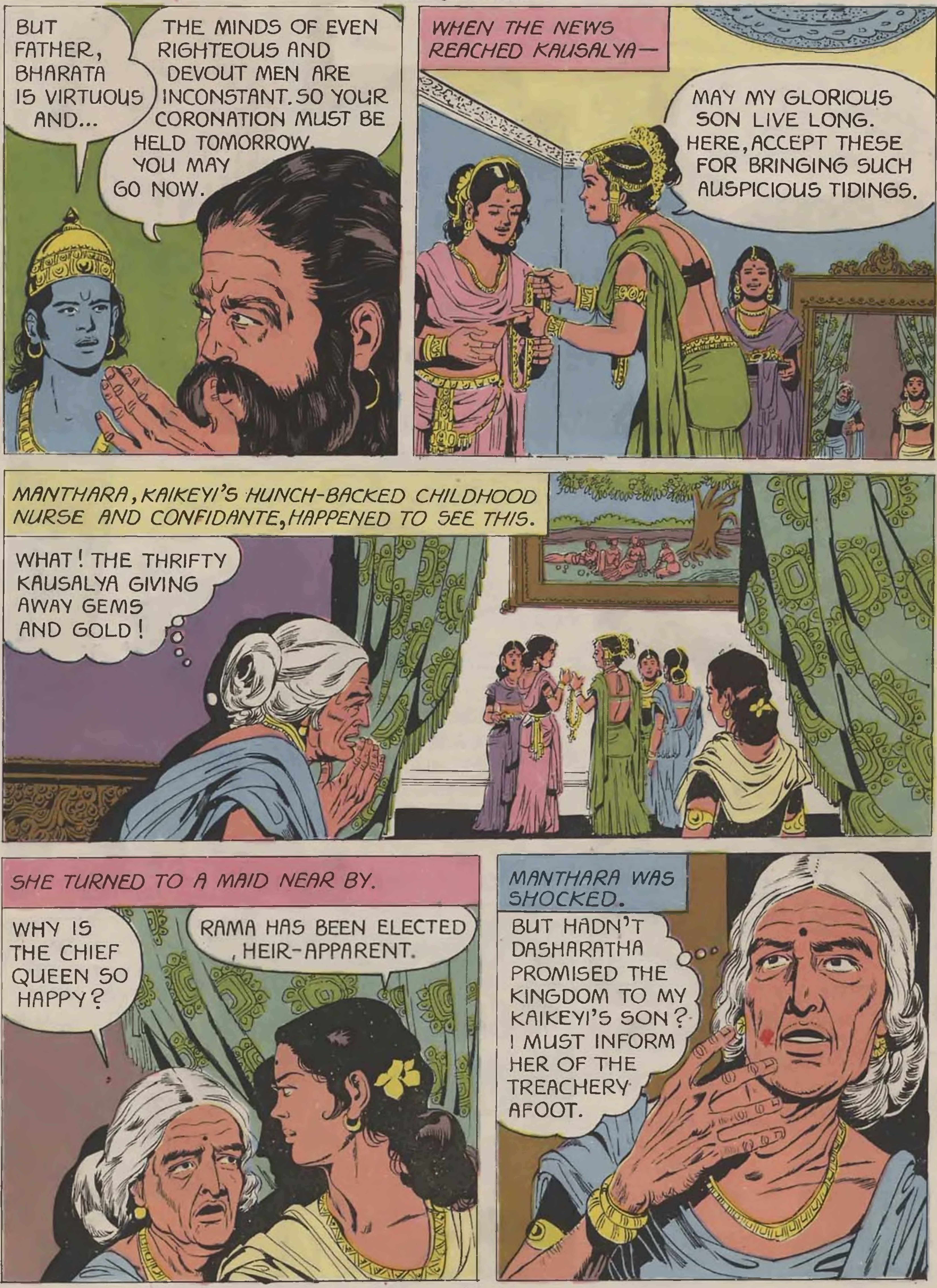

AS THE ANGRY SAGE WAS ABOUT TO STOMP OUT, VASISHTA, DASHARATHA'S SPIRITUAL GUIDE, TURNED TO THE KING.
KEEP YOUR WORD. SEND RAMA. THIS MIGHTY SAGE CAN BRING NOTHING BUT GOOD FOR YOUR SON.
THEN LET LAKSHMANA GO WITH RAMA.
SO RAMA AND LAKSHMANA WENT WITH VISHWAMITRA.
A FEW DAYS LATER, ENVOYS FROM THE COURT OF JANAKA, THE KING OF MITHILA, CAME TO THE COURT OF DASHARATHA.
WE BRING GLAD TID-INGS. SITA, THE DAUGHTER OF OUR VALIANT KING, HAS BEEN WON BY RAMA. OUR KING AWAITS YOUR PLEASURE AND INVITES YOU THERE.
WE COULD NOT HAVE HOPED FOR A BETTER ALLIANCE.
AN EXCELLENT PROPOSAL!
THEN LET US PROCEED EARLY TOMORROW. WE'LL TAKE BHARATA AND SHATRUGHNA WITH US.
AT MITHILA, JANAKA AND HIS YOUNGER BROTHER GAVE THEM A ROYAL WELCOME. LATER—
IF YOU ARE AGREEABLE I WOULD GLADLY HAVE MY SECOND DAUGHTER, URMILA, WED LAKSHMANA.


AS WAS THE CUSTOM IN THOSE DAYS, VASISHTHA ANSWERED ON BEHALF OF DASHARATHA.
THE PROPOSAL IS ACCEPTED. IF YOU ARE WILLING WE WOULD ALSO ACCEPT YOUR YOUNGER BROTHER'S DAUGHTERS FOR BHARATA AND SHATRUGHNA.
JANAKA WAS OVERJOYED.
THEN LET THE FOUR PRINCES BE MARRIED ON THE SAME DAY. THE ROYAL FAMILIES OF KOSALA AND MITHILA SHALL PROSPER IN THE UNION.
WHILE THE PREPARATIONS FOR THE WEDDINGS WERE GOING ON, KAIKEYI'S BROTHER, YUDDHAJIT, CAME TO MITHILA AND PRESENTED HIMSELF BEFORE DASHARATHA.
MY FATHER SENT ME TO AYODHYA TO TAKE BHARATA TO OUR KINGDOM FOR A FEW YEARS. I HEARD THE NEWS THERE AND FOLLOWED YOU TO MITHILA.
WELCOME, YUDDHAJIT. IT IS FORTUNATE THAT YOU ARE HERE NOW.
AS SOON AS THE ARRANGEMENTS WERE OVER, AN AUSPICIOUS DAY WAS FIXED AND THE NUPTIALS PERFORMED.


DASHARATHA AND THE YOUNG COUPLES RETURNED TO A JUBILANT AYODHYA. AT THE PALACE, DASHARATHA'S WIVES STOOD JOYOUS AND EXPECTANT.
WELCOME, DEAR DAUGHTERS. MAY YOU KNOW ONLY HAPPINESS IN YOUR NEW HOME.
A FEW MONTHS LATER, DASHARATHA SENT FOR BHARATA.
YOU MAY NOW GO WITH YOUR UNCLE TO YOUR GRAND-FATHER.
AS THE YEARS WENT BY, RAMA'S EXCELLENCE, NOW AS A HOUSEHOLDER, ENDEARED HIM EVEN MORE TO THE AGE-ING KING. ONE DAY—
I SHALL SEE RAMA CROWNED YUVRAJA, WITHOUT ANY DELAY. I SHALL ANNOUNCE MY DECISION AT AN ASSEMBLY OF ELDERS, KINGS AND WISE MEN.
DASHARATHA SOON MADE HIS WISH KNOWN TO HIS COUNSELLORS. THEN—
...AND AS TIME IS RUNNING OUT THERE IS LITTLE NEED TO INVITE ASHWAPATHI AND JANAKA TO THE CORONATION.


AT THE ASSEMBLY, AFTER DASHARATHA ANNOUNCED HIS DECISION—
IF ANY AMONG YOU FEEL THAT THIS CHOICE IS THAT OF A FOND FATHER AND NOT A JUST KING, LET ME KNOW WHAT I SHOULD DO.
THE KINGS AND SAGES AT THE SABHA WEIGHED THE MATTER CAREFULLY. THEN—
O JUST KING, INSTALL RAMA AS THE HEIR-APPARENT. WE, THE PEOPLE, LOOK FORWARD TO IT.
DASHARATHA WAS PLEASED. HE TURNED TO SUMANTRA, HIS FAVOURITE COUNSELLOR.
BRING RAMA HITHER.
A LITTLE LATER RAMA ENTERED THE ASSEMBLY.


THE KING EMBRACED HIM AND MADE HIM SIT ON A THRONE, SPECIALLY MADE FOR HIM, NEXT TO HIS OWN.
WE, THE KING AND THE PEOPLE, PROPOSE TO INSTALL YOU AS THE HEIR-APPARENT.
THE ANNOUNCEMENT OVER, RAMA RETURNED TO HIS OWN CHAMBER. LATER—
THE KING WOULD LIKE TO SEE YOU ALONE.
HAVE THE PEOPLE PROMPTED THE KING TO REVERSE A HASTY DECISION? WELL, WHATEVER HAPPENS IS FOR THE BEST.
PREPARED FOR THE WORST, RAMA STOOD BEFORE DASHARATHA. BUT—
MY SON, I HAVE DECIDED TO HAVE YOU INSTALLED TOMORROW ITSELF. LET YOUR FRIENDS PROTECT YOU WELL TONIGHT. FOR, MANY ARE THE HAZARDS THAT THREATEN AFFAIRS LIKE THIS.
RAMA LOOKED UP, AMAZED.
BUT BHARATA IS AWAY FROM THE CAPITAL...
WHICH IN MY OPINION MAKES THE TIME MOST OPPORTUNE FOR YOUR INSTALLATION.


BUT FATHER, BHARATA IS VIRTUOUS AND...
THE MINDS OF EVEN RIGHTEOUS AND DEVOUT MEN ARE INCONSTANT. SO YOUR CORONATION MUST BE HELD TOMORROW. YOU MAY GO NOW.
WHEN THE NEWS REACHED KAUSALYA—
MAY MY GLORIOUS SON LIVE LONG. HERE, ACCEPT THESE FOR BRINGING SUCH AUSPICIOUS TIDINGS.
MANTHARA, KAIKEYI'S HUNCH-BACKED CHILDHOOD NURSE AND CONFIDANTE, HAPPENED TO SEE THIS.
WHAT! THE THRIFTY KAUSALYA GIVING AWAY GEMS AND GOLD!
SHE TURNED TO A MAID NEAR BY.
WHY IS THE CHIEF QUEEN SO HAPPY?
RAMA HAS BEEN ELECTED, HEIR-APPARENT.
MANTHARA WAS SHOCKED.
BUT HADN'T DASHARATHA PROMISED THE KINGDOM TO MY KAIKEYI'S SON? I MUST INFORM HER OF THE TREACHERY AFOOT.


A LITTLE LATER, RAMA CAME TO HIS MOTHER'S APARTMENTS. SUMITRA, LAKSHMANA AND SITA WERE ALREADY THERE.
MOTHER, THE PRIESTS SAY THAT SITA MUST FAST WITH ME TONIGHT. PLEASE ARRANGE ALL THAT WE WILL NEED FOR IT.
KAUSALYA TREMBLED WITH DELIGHT TO HEAR THE WORDS SHE HAD EVER HOPED TO HEAR.
O RAMA, YOU MUST PLEASE THE HEARTS OF SUMITRA'S SONS TOO.
LAKSHMANA, MY LIFE AND THIS KINGDOM, TOO, ARE YOURS. RULE WITH ME.
MEANWHILE, IN HER ELEGANT CHAMBER, AS KAIKEYI AWAITED DASHARATHA, SHE REFLECTED ON HER GOOD FORTUNE.
EVER SINCE I CAME AS HIS BRIDE TO AYODHYA, THE KING HAS NEVER LET ME KNOW A MOMENT OF PAIN OR NEGLECT. EVEN BHARATA'S ABSENCE DOES NOT PAIN ME. RAMA BY HIS DEVOTION DOES NOT LET ME FEEL IT. IF ONLY KAUSALYA TOOK MORE KINDLY TO ME...


HER PLEASANT MUSINGS WERE RUDELY INTERRUPTED BY MANTHARA'S RAUCOUS VOICE.
WAKE UP, KAIKEYI! YOUR GOOD DAYS ARE ABOUT TO COME TO A RUDE END.
WHY, MANTHARA! YOU ARE PALE. WHAT'S THE MATTER? IS ALL WELL WITH MY LORD?
THE LORD IS IN HIS HEAVEN BUT ALL IS ILL WITH YOU. O MY INNOCENT ONE, THE CRAFTY KING HAS SENT YOUR SON AWAY, ONLY TO INSTALL HIS RAMA AS THE HEIR-APPARENT.
KAIKEYI'S FACE LIT UP.
MY VIRTUOUS RAMA? HEIR-APPARENT? YOU HAVE BROUGHT ME HAPPY NEWS.
SHE TOOK OFF HER NECKLACE AND—
HERE, TAKE THIS. ASK FOR ANY OTHER REWARD AND IT SHALL BE YOURS.
A DISGUSTED MANTHARA FLUNG THE ORNAMENT ASIDE.
DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND? WITH HER SON AS THE HEIR-APPARENT, KAUSALYA WILL HUMILIATE YOU. SHE HAS A LONG MEMORY.
RAMA WILL NOT LET HER. BESIDES, IF THE KINGDOM BE RAMA'S IT WILL BE BHARATA'S TOO. RAMA IS ABOVE PETTY DISTINCTIONS.


MANTHARA BREATHED HARD WITH EXASPERATION.
IMPOSSIBLE! THE CORONATION OF RAMA WILL CUT BHARATA OFF THE ROYAL LINE FOR EVER. IT IS YOUR DUTY AS A KSHATRIYA MOTHER TO PROTECT THE ROYAL RIGHTS OF YOUR SON AND HIS DEPEN-DANTS.
I HAD NOT THOUGHT OF THAT!
YES, WHEN RAMA BECOMES KING, HE WILL BANISH BHARATA OR KILL HIM. THEN, MY HAUGHTY ONE, YOU WILL BE A SLAVE IN THE ROYAL HOUSE-HOLD. HAVE NO DOUBTS ABOUT IT.
NO! NEVER!
MY SON MUST BECOME THE KING. THIS VERY DAY I WILL SEND RAMA TO THE FOREST AND INSTALL BHARATA ON THE THRONE.
AH, KAIKEYI! LISTEN TO ME THEN.



REMEMBER THE TWO BOONS DASHARATHA HAD OFFERED YOU MANY YEARS AGO.
ASK FOR THEM NOW. ASK FOR THE INSTAL-LATION OF BHARATA AND THE EXILE OF RAMA FOR FOURTEEN YEARS. BY THAT TIME BHARATA CAN BE A POPULAR KING AND AN INVINCIBLE MONARCH.
WHEN SHALL I DEMAND THE BOONS?
NOW! CAST OFF YOUR FINERY AND ENTER THE CHAMBER OF PROTEST. DO NOT SPEAK TO THE KING WHEN YOU SEE HIM. LET ONLY YOUR TEARS FLOW, UNCONTROLLED, LET YOUR SOBS WRENCH HIS HEART.
A FEW MINUTES LATER—
YOU HAVE ALWAYS BEEN HIS FAVOURITE. SO BE BOLD AND ACHIEVE YOUR ENDS.
HOW WISE YOU ARE, MANTHARA! I WOULD NEVER HAVE SUSPECTED THE KING'S MOTIVES. YOU SHALL HAVE ALL THE POWER AND MONEY YOU WANT WHEN BHARATA IS INSTALLED.

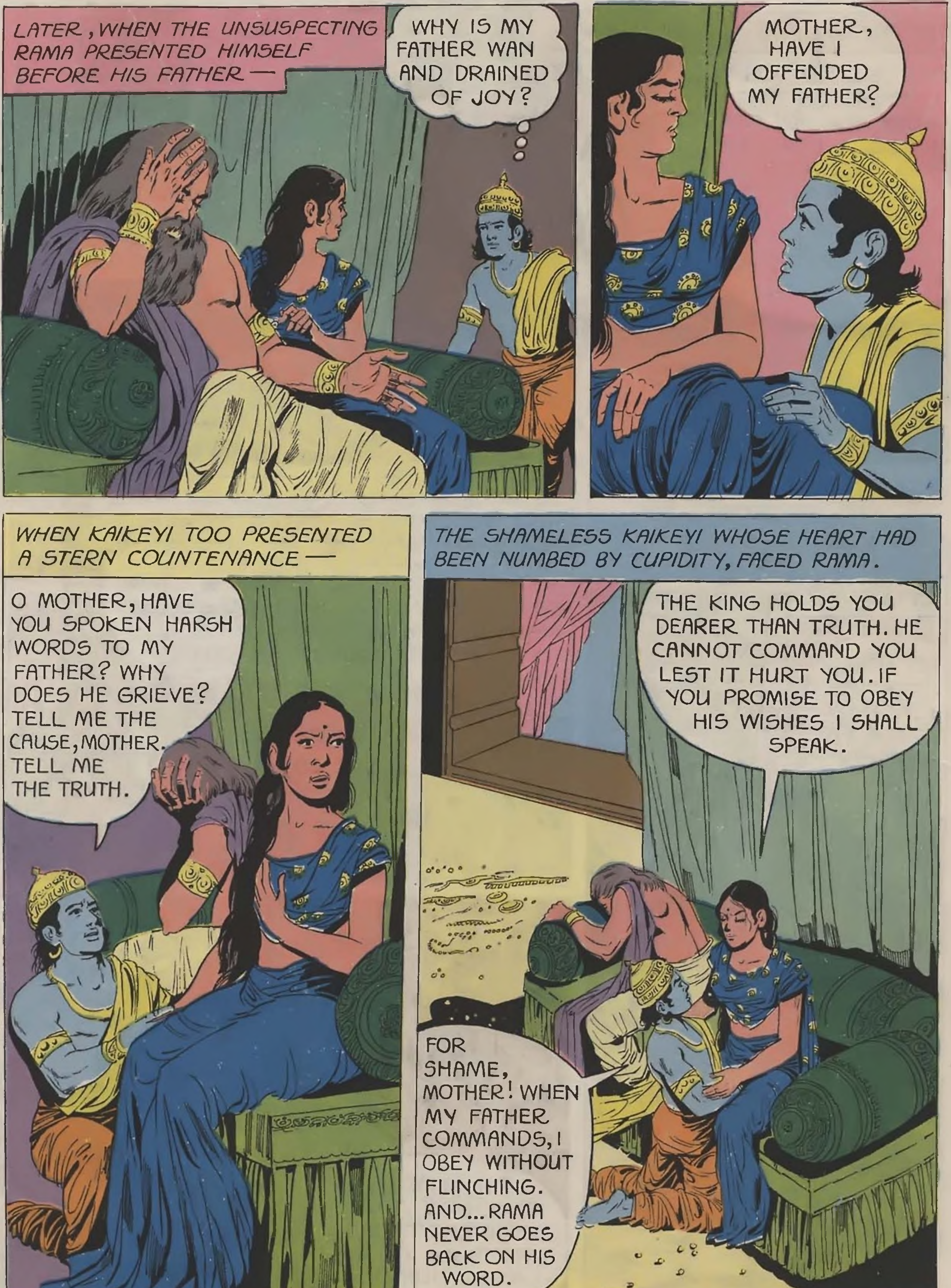

AT THAT MOMENT, DASHARATHA WAS ON HIS WAY TO THE QUEEN'S APARTMENTS.
I WILL GO TO KAIKEYI FIRST. SHE HAD ALWAYS SEEN THE HEIR-APPARENT IN RAMA.
BUT—
THIS IS UNUSUAL. KAIKEYI AWAY FROM HER CHAMBER? AT THIS HOUR?
WHERE IS QUEEN KAIKEYI?
IN THE CHAMBER OF PROTEST, YOUR MAJESTY.
IN THE CHAMBER OF PROTEST? TILL TODAY NOT ONE OF MY QUEENS HAS FOUND THE NEED TO USE IT.
DASHARATHA HURRIED THERE. HE WAS AMAZED AND DISTRESSED BY WHAT HE SAW.
O KAIKEYI, WHY ARE YOU IN TEARS? TELL ME WHY YOU ARE SAD. I'LL IMMEDIATELY SET MATTERS RIGHT.
HAS ANYONE OFFENDED YOU? HAS ANYONE REPRIMANDED YOU?


KAIKEYI SLOWLY LOOKED UP.
NO, MY LORD. I WANT SOMETHING DONE. IF YOU PROMISE TO DO IT, I WILL SPEAK.
YOU KNOW THAT EXCEPT RAMA WHO IS MY VERY LIFE, THERE IS NO ONE DEARER TO ME THAN YOU. I SWEAR BY RAMA THAT I WILL DO WHATEVER YOU WANT.
REMEMBER THE TWO BOONS YOU HAD OFFERED ME MANY YEARS AGO? I WANT THEM NOW. IF YOU REFUSE I WILL GIVE UP MY LIFE.
NAME THE BOONS AND I SHALL SEE THAT THEY ARE YOURS.
THEN LET MY SON BE PROCLAIMED HEIR-APPARENT AND LET RAMA BE BANISHED TO THE FOREST FOR FOURTEEN YEARS.
DASHARATHA WAS STUNNED. HAD HE HEARD RIGHT?
NO-O-O-O! I MAY BANISH KAUSALYA OR SUMITRA BUT NEVER RAMA, MY ELDEST SON WHOSE LOVE SUSTAINS MY LIFE.


O SINFUL WOMAN, WERE ALL YOUR PRAISES FOR RAMA UTTERED WITH AN ULTERIOR MOTIVE? YOU WILL STAIN THE FAIR NAME OF OUR ROYAL FAMILY WITH THESE BOONS. ASK FOR...
NOTHING STAINS THAT FAIR NAME AS A BROKEN PROMISE; AND A PROMISE TO ONE WHO SAVED THE KING AND THE ROYAL LINE.
SUMITRA WILL NEVER TRUST ME IF I BANISH RAMA. AND KAUSALYA? KAUSALYA, THE PERFECT WIFE, WHOM I HAVE HURT ONLY TO PLEASE YOU.
SO THAT IS IT. THE KINGDOM GOES TO RAMA, ONLY TO PLEASE KAUSALYA. NO! SHE CANNOT BE THE QUEEN MOTHER! RAMA MUST GO!


KAIKEYI, DON'T YOU REMEMBER HOW RAMA HAS ALWAYS LOVED AND WORSHIPPED YOU?
YOUR FUTILE WORDS TIRE ME. WILL YOU KEEP YOUR PROMISE OR WON'T YOU?
RAMA HAS NEVER HURT ANYONE. AM I TO WOUND HIM WITH YOUR PITILESS DEMAND? KAIKEYI, I AM OLD AND MY END IS NEAR. I BEG FOR MERCY.
FINDING HER UNMOVED, DASHARATHA FELL AT HER FEET.
THE WHOLE WORLD WILL DESPISE ME AS THE GREAT KING WHO BARTERED HIS SON AWAY FOR A FICKLE WOMAN. O KAIKEYI, I BEG YOU, SAVE ME FROM PUBLIC RIDICULE AND DISGRACE.
BUT KAIKEYI DID NOT RELENT.
O GREAT KING, I SWEAR BY MY OWN BHARATA THAT NOTHING BUT THE EXILE OF RAMA AND THE INSTALLATION OF MY SON, WILL PACIFY ME.


BY THEN, IT WAS ALMOST MORNING.
MY BELOVED SON WILL OBEY ME. OH THAT IT WERE NOT SO! FOR IF HE DOES I WILL DIE. KAIKEYI, I CONSENT. LET RAMA GO TO THE FOREST AND LET THE PREPARATIONS FOR TOMORROW, BE FOR MY FUNERAL.
O KING, DO NOT RAVE LIKE ONE MAD. INSTALL MY SON ON THE THRONE AND BANISH YOURS.
SHOCKED BY HER CRUEL WORDS, DASHARATHA FAINTED. JUST THEN, AN ANXIOUS SUMANTRA SENT BY VASISHTHA CAME THERE.
MY LORD, IT IS TIME FOR THE CEREMONY. WE AWAIT YOUR ORDERS.
TO MAKE SURE THAT HER PLANS SHOULD NOT FALL THROUGH, KAIKEYI ANSWERED FOR DASHARATHA.
O SUMANTRA, EXCITED ABOUT THE COMING EVENT THE KING HAS HAD A SLEEPLESS NIGHT. HE IS TIRED. BRING RAMA HERE TO HIM FOR HIS BLESSINGS. QUICK!
THE EFFICIENT QUEEN TOO, IS IMPATIENT TO SEE RAMA INSTALLED. I MUST HURRY.


LATER, WHEN THE UNSUSPECTING RAMA PRESENTED HIMSELF BEFORE HIS FATHER —
WHY IS MY FATHER WAN AND DRAINED OF JOY?
MOTHER, HAVE I OFFENDED MY FATHER?
WHEN KAIKEYI TOO PRESENTED A STERN COUNTENANCE —
O MOTHER, HAVE YOU SPOKEN HARSH WORDS TO MY FATHER? WHY DOES HE GRIEVE? TELL ME THE CAUSE, MOTHER. TELL ME THE TRUTH.
THE SHAMELESS KAIKEYI WHOSE HEART HAD BEEN NUMBED BY CUPIDITY, FACED RAMA.
THE KING HOLDS YOU DEARER THAN TRUTH. HE CANNOT COMMAND YOU LEST IT HURT YOU. IF YOU PROMISE TO OBEY HIS WISHES I SHALL SPEAK.
FOR SHAME, MOTHER! WHEN MY FATHER COMMANDS, I OBEY WITHOUT FLINCHING. AND... RAMA NEVER GOES BACK ON HIS WORD.



KAIKEYI THEN TOLD RAMA ALL ABOUT THE TWO BOONS. WITHOUT EXPRESSING A TRACE OF DISAPPOINTMENT RAMA FACED KAIKEYI.
YOU ARE MY MOTHER, AND YET KNOW ME NOT. ON YOUR ORDER ALONE I WOULD WILLINGLY SURRENDER NOT ONLY THE KINGDOM BUT ALSO SITA AND MY VERY LIFE.
THERE IS NO GREATER VIRTUE IN THIS WORLD THAN SERVICE TO ONE'S PARENTS IN THOUGHT, WORD AND DEED. SO LET BHARATA RULE THE KINGDOM. AND...
KAIKEYI IMPATIENTLY INTERRUPTED HIS DECLARATIONS.
NOW THAT YOU HAVE TO GO, RAMA, DO NOT DELAY. I SHALL HAVE BHARATA BROUGHT IMMEDIATELY.
AND I SHALL GO AND TAKE LEAVE OF MY MOTHER AND OFFER MY CONSOLATION TO SITA.
WHEN KAUSALYA HEARD THE TERRIBLE NEWS FROM RAMA —
O RAMA, THE GOOD FORTUNE OF A WOMAN WHO HAS KNOWN THE COMPLETE DEVOTION OF HER HUSBAND, HAS NEVER BEEN MINE. YEARS HAVE I WAITED TO SEE YOU INSTALLED AND TASTE OF HAPPINESS. AND NOW WITH A VICIOUS KAIKEYI IT WILL BE LIFE-IN-DEATH FOR ME.


RAMA DID NOT TRY TO CONSOLE HIS MOTHER. INSTEAD —
MOTHER, MY FATHER'S COMMAND BINDS US BOTH.
YES, MY WORTHY SON. MAY YOU BE HAPPY IN EXILE. I SHALL SERVE YOUR FATHER DUTIFULLY WHILE I PRAY FOR YOUR SAFE RETURN.
AS RAMA LEFT FOR THE FOREST, WITH LAKSHMANA AND SITA WHO INSISTED ON GOING WITH HIM, DASHARATHA COLLAPSED WITH GRIEF. KAIKEYI REACHED OUT TO HELP HIM.
KEEP AWAY, O VILE KAIKEYI, YOUR TOUCH WILL POLLUTE ME. YOU WILL ENJOY YOUR BOONS BUT AS A WIDOW. FOR I WILL NOT LIVE LONG WITHOUT RAMA.
THEN HE TURNED TO KAUSALYA.
TAKE ME TO YOUR PALACE, O VIRTUOUS MOTHER OF RAMA. NOWHERE ELSE WILL I KNOW PEACE.


ON THE FIFTH DAY AFTER RAMA LEFT, KAUSALYA, UNABLE TO RESTRAIN HERSELF ANY LONGER, TURNED UPON THE KING.
O KING, IGNORING ME YOU BANISHED MY SON. I MAY NOT EVEN FOLLOW HIM LEST YOU BE DESOLATE. YOU HAVE RUINED ME AND MY SON AND ALL AYODHYA.
FULL OF ANGUISH, DASHARATHA PLEADED WITH HER.
PLEASE, KAUSALYA, I ENTREAT YOU, I AM YOUR HUSBAND, VIRTUOUS OR WORTHLESS. AND I KNOW YOU TO BE WISE.
KAUSALYA, MOVED BY THE GREAT MONARCH'S HUMILITY, WAS ASHAMED OF HER OWN OUTBURST.
O LORD, DO NOT SHAME ME. A WELL-BRED WOMAN SHOULD NEVER MAKE A SUPPLICANT OF HER LORD. PARDON MY TRANSGRESSION.


ON THE SIXTH NIGHT OF RAMA'S DEPARTURE, A MEDLEY OF PAST DEEDS RACED ACROSS DASHARATHA'S BEFUDDLED MIND, BUT ONE STOOD OUT CLEAR—THE KILLING OF THE INNOCENT YOUTH. HE HALTINGLY NARRATED THE WHOLE INCIDENT TO KAUSALYA. THEN—
HIS FATHER'S CURSE HAS COME TRUE. I DIE YEARNING FOR MY SON. O KAUSALYA, I CANNOT SEE YOU. COME NEAR AND TOUCH ME.
SEEING THAT HIS END WAS NEAR, KAUSALYA SENT FOR SUMITRA.
O MY PRINCE, MY SON, WHERE ARE YOU ? O KAUSALYA ! AH, GENTLE SUMITRA ! I...
NO! LORD DO NOT LEAVE US AND GO...
OVERCOME BY GRIEF FOR HIS EXILED SON, DASHARATHA, A VICTIM OF HIS OWN KARMA, BREATHED HIS LAST.
BUT ALL KAIKEYI'S EFFORTS TO SECURE THE THRONE FOR HER SON WERE FUTILE. FOR BHARATA WOULD NOT ASCEND IT. WHEN RAMA REFUSED TO RETURN TO AYODHYA TILL HE HAD FULFILLED HIS PLEDGE, BHARATA PLACED RAMA'S SLIPPERS ON THE THRONE AND RULED THE KINGDOM FOR HIM, TILL HE RETURNED TO BE THE KING.

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